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BEYOND BORDERS: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., AFRICA, AND PAN AFRICANISM

*Jeremy I. Levitt **

This modest essay was a work of love in honor of Henry J. Richardson III, my dear brother, friend, mentor, and father in international law. Hank is universally recognized as the Dean of Black international law scholars and lawyers in the United States (U.S.), Africa, and beyond. He has single-handedly mentored three generations of international lawyers, influenced three generations of international legal scholarship, and established the Black International Tradition (BIT), which “stretches back to the very origins of our nation, preceding even the Constitution.”¹ His works on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s (King) leadership, authority, and ministry as a global human rights icon, which form the backbone of this essay, are invaluable to King scholars, researchers, and America’s political leadership in a nation and world under siege by nativism, nationalism, white nationalism, poverty, and war.²

Richardson’s analyses of King as a global human rights leader raise fundamental questions about King’s relationship with Africa that I first began exploring in 2002 while a law professor and director of the Center on International Law, Policy, and Africa at DePaul University. This culminated in a generous research grant from DePaul’s Office of Diversity, which funded one of the nation’s first roundtable discussions on King and Africa titled, “The Relevance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Africa” on February 25, 2004. The esteemed scholar and lawyer Roger Wilkens (nephew of Roy Wilkens) delivered the keynote address and the panel included noted legal scholar Linda Sheryl Greene, historian Matthew C. Whitaker, and yours truly. The success of the roundtable led to a panel on King at the 2006 Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting titled “The

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1. Henry J. Richardson III, *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an International Human Rights Leader*, 52 VILL. L. REV. 471, 472 (2007). The Black International Law Tradition (BIT) may be broadly defined as the historiography of Black claims and demands to constructively and freely participate in the international law process. This notably includes the invocation of international legal doctrine, norms, jurisprudence, and practice as a path to freedom. The BIT confirms “liberation-promising normative authority” outside of repressive law and policy shaped by the internal logic and priorities of civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and religious oppression and domination. Henry J. Richardson III, *Two Treaties and Global Influences of the American Civil Rights Movement, Through the Black International Tradition*, 18 VA. J. SOC. POL’Y & L. 59, 61 (2010).

2. See, e.g., Henry J. Richardson III, *From Birmingham’s Jail to Beyond the Riverside Church: Martin Luther King’s Global Authority*, 59 HOWARD L.J. 169 (2015); Henry J. Richardson III, *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an International Human Rights Leader*, *supra* note 1.

Consequences Will Be World Shaking: Martin Luther King, Africa and Global Justice" chaired by the eminent historian Quintard Taylor, Jr. and included renowned religious studies scholar Lewis Baldwin, Greene, Whitaker, and me. Following the meeting Baldwin, Whitaker, and I organized a book project that has been shelved for nearly a decade. This modest essay is informed by the book proposal we collaboratively wrote a decade ago and inspired by Richardson's refashioning of King's legacy through the prism of international human rights law and the Black International Tradition. It offers a narrowly-tailored analysis aimed at generating new knowledge and scholarship on King, Africa, and Pan-Africanism. It is multi-disciplinary, drawing on theoretical and methodological approaches and presumptions from law, political science, history, and religious studies.

I. INTRODUCTION

This essay primarily analyzes whether Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Pan-Africanist—intellectual territory that is *terra nullius* (a Latin phrase arguably meaning land belonging to no one) across the social sciences. This is a vital research question because as the eminent scholar James Cone explains:

When Martin Luther King Jr., achieved international fame as the leader of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955-1956, no African country below the Sahara had achieved political independence from the colonial regimes in Europe. When he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, twelve years later, in 1968, the great majority of African countries had gained their independence.³

King's timing was perfect, even prophetic. His global ministry was birthed during Africa's decolonization period and his transnational advocacy helped elevate the Black American Civil Rights Movement and globalized the international human rights movement against racism, colonization, and war. In fact, as Richardson observes, King was the first "modern black leader, subsequent to DuBois to most prominently embody" the unity of the civil rights and international human rights discourses and movements.⁴ From this background, what makes the central question of whether King was a Pan-Africanist even more intriguing is George Houser's (Houser) observation that King was not "essentially a Pan-Africanist" because his starting point (whatever that means) was not his [King's] African roots, but that the "struggle was universal."⁵ Houser's Pan-Africanist litmus test is also curious. In my view, embracing one's African roots as a starting point or viewing the struggle for racial justice and equality as universal is neither a qualifier nor disqualifier for being a Pan-Africanist. Elsewhere, I defined Pan-Africanism as

3. James H. Cone, *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Third World*, 74 J. OF AM. HIST. 455, 455 (1987).

4. Richardson, *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an International Human Rights Leader*, *supra* note 1, at 471.

5. George M. Houser, *Freedom's Struggle Crosses Oceans and Mountains: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Liberation Struggles in Africa and America*, in *WE SHALL OVERCOME: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., AND THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE* 183 (Peter J. Albert & Ronald Hoffman eds., 1993) (emphasis added).

a movement for the globalization of African unity.⁶ At its core, Pan-Africanism is the internationalization of African liberation philosophy, which seeks to unify and empower people of African descent all over the world to demand and attain freedom, equality, and justice from the domestic and global forces of white domination, and to maximize their human potential.⁷ As a global liberation philosophy, Pan-Africanism was born of the effort to empower black people all over the world—whether Nigerian, African-American, or Black Australian—to dismantle the institutions of global white supremacy, including slavery, imperialism, colonialism, and apartheid.⁸ This includes confronting the contemporary institutional vestiges of these practices, such as neo-colonialism, global indebtedness, chronic underdevelopment, acute poverty, perpetual warfare, and rapid disease progression.⁹

King boldly embraced his African heritage and even encouraged Black Americans to immigrate to Africa to assist in her development.¹⁰ King's Pan-African advocacy helped reshape and internationalize Black American distinctiveness, oppression, and claims to outside law, namely by refashioning international human rights law through the prism of Pan-Africanism. He worked tirelessly to humanize African identity and subjugation by openly contesting the legitimacy of racial discrimination, Apartheid, colonialism, and underdevelopment. Richardson rightly notes that "King linked the international peace movement to the civil rights movement and invoked the binding authority of international law through the United Nations Charter on the United States regarding African Americans and its general foreign policy."¹¹ In November 1957, Oliver Tambo, Secretary-General of the African National Congress, wrote to King requesting his support of the "upcoming international day of protest against apartheid" given "South Africa's continuous violation of the Declaration of Human Rights," evidencing King's global consciousness, respect among progressive African leaders, and appetite for Pan-African struggle.¹² He seamlessly integrated his anti-racism, anti-colonial, and anti-war agenda and advocacy with Africa, Africans, and African-Americans. For example, King represented Black America during Ghana and Nigeria's Independence Day celebrations in March 6, 1957 and October 1, 1960, respectively, and was a bulwark anti-Apartheid activist.¹³ Furthermore, King

6. JEREMY I. LEVITT, *Pan-Africanism*, in 3 ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GLOBALIZATION 931 (2006).

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.*

10. The words Black and African-American are used interchangeably in this essay.

11. Richardson, *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an International Human Rights Leader*, *supra* note 1, at 472.

12. LETTER FROM OLIVER TAMBO TO REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING (Nov. 18, 1957), *reprinted in* THE PAPERS OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. VOLUME IV: SYMBOL OF THE MOVEMENT, JANUARY 1957–DECEMBER 1958 325, 325 (Clayborne Carson et al. eds., 2000).

13. Francis Kwarteng, *Martin Luther King, Jr. on Nkrumah*, GHANAWEB (Sept. 20, 2015), <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Martin-Luther-King-Jr-On-Nkrumah-382791>.

was a member of the national committee of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), an organization founded by Houser to support anti-colonial struggles and defeat Apartheid.¹⁴ In December 1962, King, Houser, and others met with John F. Kennedy about U.S./Africa policy, and in his 1965 speech *Let My People Go* (organized by Houser), King termed U.S. support of South Africa “the shame of our nation” and called on the international community to boycott South Africa.¹⁵

II. BELOVED PAN-AFRICANISM

Although this essay largely focuses on the question whether King was a Pan-Africanist, it laterally examines the circumstances, experiences, and phenomena that influenced his Pan-African ideals. It also indirectly asks how might King’s global ministry, including his nonviolent direct action philosophy and approach, be employed to edify scholarship on King, Pan-African discourses, and more pragmatically, the rule of law, democratization, social justice, and peace processes in Africa today. These questions raise others that will be tangentially addressed but ideally serve as guide posts for other researchers, such as at what point in his career as a civil rights leader did he begin to address issues of African independence? What was the nature of King’s range of contributions—material, spiritual, and otherwise—to the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles in Africa? One might advance other related questions that fall outside the scope of this research but nonetheless laterally apply: How valid is the claim that “King’s vision included national and international topics even in high school”?¹⁶ What significance did this hold for his developing consciousness of and views on Africa? What impact did King’s family, church ties, and his training at Morehouse College, Crozer Theological Seminary, and Boston University have on his emerging perspective on Africa and her peoples?

Reassured by Richardson’s analyses, this essay argues that King’s global ministry, leadership, and human rights activism and persona are more appropriately viewed through the prism of Pan-Africanism or what I refer to as “Beloved Pan-Africanism.” King’s international doctrine evolved into *Beloved Pan-Africanism* birthing his global human rights ministry. It appears on second glance that *Beloved Pan-Africanism* preceded, and at a minimum, was concurrently conceived alongside King’s notion of the *Beloved Community*, which was his global vision that all people “can share the wealth of the earth” and “poverty, hunger and homelessness” wouldn’t be “tolerated because international standards of human decency” would not allow it.¹⁷ King’s *Beloved Community* seems to

14. *American Committee on Africa (ACOA)*, KING ENCYCLOPEDIA, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_american_committee_on_africa_acoa/ (last visited Mar. 12, 107).

15. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Let My People Go*, Address at Hunter College for Human Rights Day (Dec. 10, 1965) (transcript available at <http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/speeches/peopleking.php>).

16. See MICHAEL G. LONG, AGAINST US, BUT FOR US: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AND THE STATE 6 n.17 (2002) (“King’s vision included national and international topics, even in high school.”).

17. *The King Philosophy*, THE KING CENTER, <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king->

universalize and cross-fertilize *Beloved Pan-Africanism* with experiential insights from the Montgomery Bus Boycott and his sojourner to Ghana. King observes:

Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.¹⁸

Beloved Pan-Africanism is governed by opposition to what he concluded were the three evils of racism, poverty, and militarism, which manifest through various forms of systematic oppression, including segregation and Apartheid, colonialism, and imperialism and unjust war. King viewed racial and colonial oppression as evil. Hence, his *Beloved Pan-Africanism* rested on five pillars: love, radical non-violent direct action, empathy, grave personal sacrifice, and divine justice. King's *Beloved Pan-Africanism* was inherently anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-war with all their tragic civil, political, economic, social, and cultural antecedents. Richardson comments that King "projected an African American alternative approach to international relations and international law. He based this alternative approach on non-violence and profound love of human and humanity" best illustrated in his Riverside Church speech.¹⁹ Similarly, Cone argues that "King's focus on the global implications of racism in relation to poverty and war led him to conclude that the slums in American cities were a 'system of internal colonialism' not unlike the exploitation of the Third World by European nations."²⁰ Cone also argues that King "did not believe that one could participate with God in the creation of the beloved community and at the same time use violent methods. . . [p]eople who use violence have lost faith in the God of love and thus, have lost hope that a beloved community can be created."²¹ Framing King's Pan-Africanist ideals is important given that his Pan-Africanist persona preceded his October 14, 1964 crowning as a Nobel Laureate and global human rights leader by at least a decade, supporting the idea that King's Pan-African ideals and activism significantly influenced his global human rights ministry.

In two pioneering works clothed in the Black International Tradition,²²

philosophy (last visited Mar. 11, 2017).

18. *Id.*

19. Richardson, *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an International Human Rights Leader*, *supra* note 1, at 473.

20. Cone, *supra* note 3, at 462; Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago Plan (Jan. 7, 1966); Martin Luther King, Jr., European Tour (Mar. 23 1966).

21. James H. Cone, *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Third World*, in *WORLD ORDER AND RELIGION* 119 (Wade Clark Roof eds., 1991).

22. Henry J. Richardson III, *Two Treaties and Global Influences of the American Civil Rights Movement, through the Black International Tradition*, *supra* note 1. The Black International Law Tradition (BIT) may be broadly defined as the historiography of Black claims and demands to constructively and freely participate in international law process. This notably includes the invocation of international legal doctrine, norms, jurisprudence and practice as a path to freedom. The BIT confirms "liberation-promising normative authority" outside of repressive

Richardson eloquently examines and weaves into normative tapestry King's global authority as a human rights activist and his contribution to international human rights law development as a global human rights leader.²³ In so doing he principally examines two monumental works of King including "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" to Fellow Clergymen on April 16, 1963 (hereinafter *The Letter*), and his "Beyond Vietnam" speech, which King delivered to the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam at Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967 (hereinafter *Riverside Church* speech).²⁴ Richardson highlights several important normative arguments forwarded by King in *The Letter* and *Riverside Church* speech. In the former he argues that King identifies the "intertwining of black freedom and inspirational struggle between the Civil Rights Movement, the global decolonization movement, the Pan-African freedom struggle for independence, including against South African apartheid, and even cold war-related freedom movements such as the Hungarian uprising."²⁵ In the latter speech Richardson contends that King "demanded the consistency of rights and justice between US foreign policy and its domestic policy."²⁶ The US cannot support overseas oppression while supporting equal justice at home.²⁷ He [King] defined the necessity of enforcing both international political and civil rights, and economic, social and cultural rights as a matter of law for poor people and people of color."²⁸ Richardson notes that King "supported land reform for peasants in Latin America, notwithstanding contrary US policies" and "defined and upheld the general right of Black people to take international positions on major issues, here following W.E.B. DuBois and his own recent examples."²⁹ King's advocacy for poor and oppressed peoples in Latin America and Eastern Europe demonstrates a core Pan-African value: zealous support for non-Black poor, exploited, and repressed people. Richardson's analogy of King and DuBois was intentional, arguing the former transcended national frontiers to become a global human rights icon years before his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize. Finally, in the *Riverside Church* speech Richardson noted that King "internationalized the Civil Rights Movement,

law and policy shaped by the internal logic and priorities of civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and religious oppression and domination. *Id.*

23. Richardson, *From Birmingham's Jail to Beyond the Riverside Church: Martin Luther King's Global Authority*, *supra* note 2; Richardson, *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an International Human Rights Leader*, *supra* note 1.

24. King wrote Letter from a Birmingham Jail to Fellow Clergymen on April 16, 1963. Martin Luther, King, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, THE KING CENTER PENNSYLVANIA, (April 16, 1962) <http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/letter-birmingham-city-jail-0>. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Beyond Vietnam*, Address Delivered to the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam at Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967, in *A CALL TO CONSCIENCE: THE LANDMARK SPEECHES OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.* 139 (Clayborne Carson & Kris Shephard eds., 2001).

25. Richardson, *From Birmingham's Jail to Beyond the Riverside Church: Martin Luther King's Global Authority*, *supra* note 2, at 177.

26. *Id.* at 189.

27. *Id.*

28. *Id.* (emphasis added).

29. *Id.*

including in joining to it the global focus on the Vietnam War as a Nobel Peace Laureate, and implicitly defining his ministry as serving the total U.S. justice struggle.³⁰ King's internationalization of the American Civil Rights Movement was monumental; blacks disproportionately fought and died in Vietnam and faced racial tyranny and Jim Crow segregation upon their return to the U.S. His appeal to outside law, states (e.g. Ghana and Nigeria), and global institutions (e.g. the United Nations (U.N.)) for moral backing was forged by his belief in natural law and justice and informed by a deep spiritual conviction to non-violently challenge and disobey unjust law.

King's "Beloved Pan-Africanism" was inspired by radical decolonization and anti-Apartheid movements in Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. It was underwritten by Gandhian notions of non-violence, cemented by King's dedication to racial justice and equality at the domestic and international levels, and finally, his empathy for oppressed people of color fighting colonialism and neo-colonialism from Hanoi to Harare and Havana to Honiara. As Richardson wisely noted, this activism was powered by King's ardent belief in the international rule of law through the "United Nations binding powerful states, the unity of love including for opponents and enemies, and a worldwide fellowship as a supreme unifying principle of life which unlocks the door to ultimate reality and is necessary for the survival of mankind."³¹ Henceforth, Richardson convincingly opines that King's advocacy fuses together the discourses on civil rights and human rights while projecting an African-American alternative approach to international relations and international law; a radical approach based on fervent non-violent advocacy and protest and a profound love of humanity. He argues that King's ministry of rights leadership invoked and interpreted international human rights law, insisting that the U.S. was obligated to adhere to international legal norms protecting the rights and the well-being of African-Americans.

III. KING'S SIGNIFICANCE AS AN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LEADER

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s significance as an anti-racism, anti-colonial, anti-war activist and supporter of African independence, peace, and justice has been almost entirely ignored in scholarship on King, the civil rights movement, and Pan-Africanism. Not a single book-length manuscript, with the possible exception of Baldwin,³² exists on King's thoughts on, and relationship to, Africa and her peoples. This is quite peculiar and indeed indefensible, especially since King spoke so vigorously and consistently about the deleterious effects of imperialism, xenophobia, and apartheid on the developing nations of Africa and beyond. While Richardson's studies illuminate King's global leadership and actions aimed at normatively combining the American civil rights and international human rights

30. *Id.*

31. Richardson, *From Birmingham's Jail to Beyond the Riverside Church: Martin Luther King's Global Authority*, *supra* note 2, at 189.

32. See generally, LEWIS V. BALDWIN, *TOWARD THE BELOVED COMMUNITY: MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND SOUTH AFRICA* (1995).

movements as a way of safeguarding African-American liberty, this essay seeks to correct King's glaring omission in Black studies and human rights discourses. This work insists that a serious exploration of King's contributions to anti-racism, anti-colonial, and anti-war struggles in Africa and beyond is essential to understanding his significance as a Pan-African leader and icon who argued that "[a]ll over the world, like a fever, the freedom movement is spreading in the widest liberation in history. The great masses of people are determined to end the exploitation of their races and land."³³

Richardson convincingly argues that *The Letter* demonstrates King's maturity as a global human rights leader seeking to tackle such issues as "decolonization, Pan-Africanism, human rights, peace, and the unity of love of all people—allies and enemies."³⁴ Richardson rightly identifies King's intertwining of Black freedom struggles from the American Civil Rights Movement and global decolonization movements throughout Africa and Asia to Pan-African freedom struggles against racist Apartheid regimes in South Africa and the U.S. King was an anti-Apartheid activist who forged and normalized relations with key leaders in Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) as early as the 1950's,³⁵ long before his surrogates (e.g. Reverend Jesse Jackson and Andrew Young) and followers, including Randall Robinson and Gay McDougall, took-up the mantle. Richardson highlights King's insightful references to just and unjust law in the wake of Hungarian oppression under Hitler and showcases King's normative understanding and arguments for respecting core international human rights law principles. He was a student of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and thus international law who believed that "[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."³⁶ The UDHR aligned with his Christian values and was inspired by natural law concepts that emanate from Judeo-Christian precepts. King embraced the right to life, liberty and the security of the person, racial equality, self-determination, and democracy principles enshrined in the UDHR,³⁷ and as a Nobel Peace Laureate, would have been familiar with them.

The International Bill of Human Rights is comprised of the UDHR and its companion covenants on civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, which were neither adopted nor in force until 1966 and 1976, respectively. Hence, King's human rights ministry predated the U.N.'s efforts to successfully codify a normative human rights regime. In this context, Richardson rightly identifies and illuminates King's reference to African-American claims to outside

33. Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Quest for Peace and Justice*, Nobel Lecture, December 11, 1964 in MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., *WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE: CHAOS OR COMMUNITY?* 179 (2010).

34. Richardson, *From Birmingham's Jail to Beyond the Riverside Church: Martin Luther King's Global Authority*, *supra* note 2, at 177.

35. See generally, LEWIS V. BALDWIN, *supra* note 32.

36. G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights art. 1 (Dec. 10, 1948).

37. *Id.* at art. 3, 6, 7, 21.

authority; being “caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his Black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean. . . the United States Negro is moving with a great sense of urgency toward the promised land of racial justice,”³⁸ as a clear indication of King’s Pan-African leanings. King’s advocacy for justice, the “Black Diaspora” and other peoples and nations of color place him squarely in the mold of a 20th Century Pan-African leader. In fact, Richardson argues that “[T]he Letter must be interpreted as grounded in the intersections between the global human rights narrative certifying the universal right to racial justice of Black Americans in unity with that of other peoples of color in the world community, and the American civil rights narrative.”³⁹ What Richardson refers to as King’s “global human rights narrative” I argue was preceded by his Beloved Pan-Africanist narrative that, again, called for love, radical non-violent, direct action, empathy, grave personal sacrifice, and divine justice in the face of racism, poverty, and militarism manifested as segregation and Apartheid, colonialism, imperialism, and unjust war. Richardson acknowledges this view arguing that in his *Riverside Church* speech, “King demanded that the national civil rights narrative be married to the global rights and Pan-African narratives, that these conjoined narratives should incorporate the international peace narrative, and that the linkages among war, poverty, and racism should be made by the American civil rights movements a focus of its national action program.”⁴⁰ In this vein Richardson highlights four core objectives accomplished by the *Riverside Church* speech including: (1) demanding consistency in the application of rights, law, and justice between American domestic and foreign policy i.e., can’t support equal justice in the U.S. and oppressive policies abroad; (2) embraced civil and political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights as a matter of law, despite the fact that U.S. policy embraced the former not the latter; (3) advocated for the right of Black Americans to take contrary positions on and engage the U.S. on significant foreign policy issues such as global racism and the Vietnam War; (4) internationalized the Civil Rights Movement by addressing international issues like the Vietnam war or advocating for human rights using international law norms as a Nobel Peace Laureate.⁴¹ I agree with Richardson’s interpretation of the *Riverside Church* speech.

In his *Riverside Church* speech King celebrated his anti-war ministry of peace as a “calling beyond national allegiances” to his core commitment to the meaning and ministry of Jesus Christ amplified by the Nobel Prize for Peace, which he viewed as a “commission—a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for ‘the brotherhood of man.’”⁴² King went on to argue:

38. Richardson, *From Birmingham’s Jail to Beyond the Riverside Church: Martin Luther King’s Global Authority*, *supra* note 2, at 177–78.

39. *Id.* at 178.

40. *Id.* at 188.

41. *Id.* at 189.

42. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam”, Address Delivered to the Clergy and

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression and out of the wombs of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions. It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch anti-revolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has the revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgement against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes-hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism.⁴³

The *Riverside Church* speech projected a radically novel approach intended to "operate against [the] balance of power politics."⁴⁴ As Richardson notes, it was a "new, radical [in being academically disreputable], approach to international relations" based on:

Ghandian non-violence, human dignity, empathy for third world peoples against colonialism and neo-colonialism, the international rule of law through the United Nations binding powerful states, the unity of love including for opponents and enemies, and a world wide fellowship as a supreme unifying principle of life which unlocks the door to ultimate reality and is necessary for the survival of mankind.⁴⁵

As the next section demonstrates, King's radical international doctrine, or *Beloved Pan-Africanism*, including his willingness to directly challenge big powers and advocate for Africa and the Black Diaspora are best illustrated by his *Birth of a New Nation* speech.

IV. THE BIRTH OF A NEW NATION, DUBOIS, AND PAN-AFRICANISM

On April 7, 1957, Dr. King delivered what the author believes is his most radically insightful and edifying speech—titled *The Birth of a New Nation*—to the congregants at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.⁴⁶ The *Birth of a New Nation* speech fortified the theoretical framework that underwrote *Beloved Pan-Africanism*, and was a *tour de force* in Black liberation speech drawing conceptual propositions from history, law, political science, sociology,

Laymen Concerned about Vietnam at Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967, in A CALL TO CONSCIENCE: THE LANDMARK SPEECHES OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. 139 (Clayborne Carson & Kris Shephard eds., 2001).

43. *Id.*

44. Richardson, *From Birmingham's Jail to Beyond the Riverside Church: Martin Luther King's Global Authority*, *supra* note 2, at 189.

45. *Id.*

46. Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Birth of a New Nation*, Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala (April 7, 1957), <http://thekingcenter.org/archive/document/birth-new-nation>.

and Christian ethics. The speech was conceived while King attended Ghana's Independence Day celebration on March 6, 1957, and informed by his experience as an African-American Christian human rights leader, battling white supremacy in the U.S. King and his wife, Coretta Scott King, were personally invited to attend Ghana's independence festivities by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first post-independence Prime Minister. This speech and the plethora of letters, sermons, articles, and later speeches lead me to respectfully prod Richardson's argument that:

...King closely approached but did not go quite as far as the seminal thinking and actions of W.E.B. DuBois. DuBois held that [B]lack's rights in America would only be protected when they made common cause with colonized and subordinated peoples of color in the Third World. King saw the non-violent struggle in America, initially to perfect the Constitution, as part of the same global struggle and necessarily inspired and borrowing from it, as a first priority in realizing [B]lack American rights and dreams.⁴⁷

Richardson implies that King had Pan-African inclinations, but he does not suggest or conclude that King was a Pan-Africanist or alternatively dispute Houser's notion that King was "not essentially a Pan-Africanist." Hence, I reverentially nudge Richardson's assertion that King "approached but did not go as far as" DuBois because, using Richardson's standard, documentary evidence clearly shows that King did in fact make "common cause" with other colonized and subordinated people.⁴⁸ Remarkably, by the age of twenty-eight, King was fully immersed in African Affairs having already visited Ghana, forged a firm bond with South African anti-Apartheid leaders, and delivered *Birth of a New Nation*; whereas, Pan-Africanism's father, DuBois, didn't sojourn to Africa (Liberia) until the age of fifty-five, nor intellectually engage the continent with as much fervor as early in his life as King.

King was an admirer and follower of DuBois and agreed with his philosophical ideals about the interdependent plights of Blacks in America and Africa. Drawing on Richardson's catchphrase, it's important to remember that King's "common cause" thesis may have been more transcendent than DuBois' given his strong belief in God and divine justice; DuBois was not driven by religion. Like King, Africa and her peoples are deeply religious and driven by spiritual regimes begging the question whether King's Beloved Pan-Africanism would have taken deeper root in the Continent. In fact, King's last major speech was the occasion of the International Cultural Evening on the 100th birthday of DuBois at Carnegie Hall on February 23, 1968. In this radically insightful Pan-African-centered speech, King commented that "[a]fter World War I he [DuBois] called Pan-African Congresses in 1919, 1921, and 1923, alarming imperialists in all countries and disconcerting Negro moderates in America who were afraid of

47. Richardson, *From Birmingham's Jail to Beyond the Riverside Church: Martin Luther King's Global Authority*, *supra* note 2, at 172–73.

48. *Id.*

this restless, militant, black genius.”⁴⁹ King argued that “[f]or the American Negro there is a special relationship with Africa. It is the land of his origin.”⁵⁰ Like DuBois, King closely embraced this special relationship built on racial affinity and oppression. He identified with and recognized Africa and her people as ancestral kin, and like DuBois, King recognized the defeat of racism in the U.S. as inseparable and interdependent from the fight against Apartheid. King declared that DuBois “was one of the most remarkable men of our time,”⁵¹ and revered him as the father of Pan-Africanism. King proclaiming that DuBois “died at home in Africa among his cherished ancestors” demonstrating the former’s recognition of Africa and her people as the homeland and descendants, respectively, of Black Americans.

As a Pan-Africanist, King highlights and shares DuBois’ recognition of the “importance of the bonds between American Negroes and the land of their ancestors,”⁵² contradicting Baldwin’s claim that “King was too much of an integrationist and a believer in a common culture shared by blacks and whites in America to fit neatly into the traditions of Pan-Africanism.”⁵³ Baldwin mistakes King’s belief in the universalization of human rights for all people with the myth that King held a narrowly tailored philosophy on integration. Neither King nor DuBois were segregationists because they believed that people should be free to live and associate with whom they choose thereby embracing the core Pan-Africanist anti-racism value of non-discrimination. In lock step with DuBois, King proclaimed:

In conclusion let me say that Dr. Du Bois’ greatest virtue was his committed empathy with all the oppressed and his divine dissatisfaction with all forms of injustice. Today we are still challenged to be dissatisfied. Let us be dissatisfied until every man can have food and material necessities for his body, culture and education for his mind, freedom and human dignity for his spirit.⁵⁴

In this context, Hauser’s apparent distinction between Pan-Africanist and universalist (or integrationist) ideals are used as a means of denying King his rightful place as a Pan-African leader, which seems trivial given that the two ideals intersect and complement the anti-racist, anti-poverty, anti-colonial, and anti-war notions in Pan-Africanism. As Cone states, King’s dream “was not limited to racial equality in the United States but was defined by its universality and eternity”, which complemented the global thinking, advocacy, and interests of 20th Century

49. Martin Luther King, Jr., Honoring Dr. DuBois, The Centennial Address delivered at Carnegie Hall in New York City (Feb. 23, 1968), <http://pmeaye.tripod.com/kingondubois.pdf>. The occasion was the International Cultural Evening sponsored by Freedom Ways Magazine on the 100th birthday of Dr. W. E. B. DuBois. *Id.*

50. Martin Luther King, Jr., Let My People Go, Hunter College, NYC, Human Rights Day, (Dec. 10, 1965), <http://rfksafilm.org/speeches/peopleking.php>.

51. King, *supra* note 49, at 6.

52. *Id.* at 5.

53. Baldwin, *supra* note 32, at 189.

54. King, *supra* note 49, at 14–15.

Pan-Africanists in the Third World and beyond.⁵⁵ King's acknowledgement of DuBois's work as a human rights leader reinforces the view that his global ministry and attentiveness to *Beloved Pan-Africanism* was fortified by DuBois. King's Pan-African inclinations were highly developed long before the Montgomery Bus Boycott (December 5, 1955 to December 20, 1956), and his notion of *Beloved Pan-Africanism* honed nearly a decade before delivering his *I Have a Dream* speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington (August 28, 1963). On the topic of Black American unity with Africa King explained:

For the American Negro there is a special relationship with Africa. It is the land of his origin. It was despoiled by invaders; its culture was arrested and concealed to justify white supremacy. The American Negro's ancestors were not only driven into slavery, but their links with their past were severed so that their servitude might be psychological as well as physical. In this period when the American Negro is giving moral leadership and inspiration to his own nation, he must find the resources to aid his suffering brothers in his ancestral homeland. Nor is this aid a one-way street. The civil rights movement in the United States has derived immense inspiration from the successful struggles of those Africans who have attained freedom in their own nations. The fact that black men govern States, are building democratic institutions, sit in world tribunals, and participate in global decision-making gives every Negro a needed sense of dignity.⁵⁶

On August 27, 1963, to the chagrin of King and the Pan-African world, DuBois, co-founder of the NAACP, died at the age of 95 in Ghana, one day before the March on Washington and King's celebrated *I Have a Dream* speech. One wonders whether King's most celebrated moment as a global human rights leader was emboldened by DuBois's death. Prior to King's speech, Roy Wilkins, who was not a fan of DuBois because of his communist views, asked all participants at the March on Washington to honor DuBois with a moment of silence.

Richardson did not examine King's 1957 *Birth of a New Nation* speech or significant documentary evidence prior to *The Letter* (1963) because had he, he would likely modify claims that King did not "go quite as far" as DuBois's and soften his 'common cause' thesis. As the next section reveals, King considered the histories of Blacks in Ghana and America as intertwined and interdependent. He recognized their common heritage and history and again, argued and advocated for African-Americans to immigrate to Ghana to assist in its development. King seemed to believe Ghanaian independence was a hard indicator that the forces of racism, poverty, and war—triple evils in King's mind—were falling to the divine order of freedom, justice, and equality. King's faith in Black freedom was first and foremost tied to his faith in divine justice, something that DuBois's arguably secular intellect did not embrace. King believed that racial oppression, global poverty, and militarism were rooted in global white supremacy which is why by

55. Cone, *supra* note 3, at 459.

56. King, *supra* note 50.

the age of 29, he was dedicated to challenging the three evils at home and abroad. This view is certainly typified in his famous claim that an "[i]njustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."⁵⁷

V. BIRTHING A NEW NATION AND BELOVED PAN-AFRICANISM

In his *Birth of a New Nation* Speech, King demonstrated a mastery of the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as well as the ravenous impacts of the slave trade, enslavement, colonialism and racial discrimination on all persons of African descent. In so doing he offers one of the most compelling Pan-African critiques of Black oppression by a Christian leader. King argues that,

[f]rom 1850 to 1957, March sixth, the Gold Coast [now Ghana] was a colony of the British Empire. And as a colony she suffered all of the injustices, all of the exploitation, all of the humiliation that comes as a result of colonialism. But like all slavery, like all domination, like all exploitation, it came to the point that the people got tired of it.⁵⁸

King challenged the morality of the colonial encounter using Ghana's experience while simultaneously comparing strategies and tactics employed in Ghana against colonialism with those needed to combat and arrest Jim Crow segregation and a legacy of American racism and disenfranchisement.⁵⁹

Studies on King's *Birth of a New Nation* are sadly understated by King scholars and sorely underrepresented in the historical literature on King. This is unfortunate given that it crystalizes King's global vision and empathy for, and dedication to, Africa and all persons of African descent oppressed by the three evils of racism, poverty, militarism and their antecedents (e.g. segregation, Apartheid, colonization and war); schemes that *Beloved Pan-Africanism* seeks to dismantle and destroy. King recounts "weeping" when Nkrumah addressed Ghanaians during independence celebrations. He was morally persuaded and moved by Nkrumah's address to a packed polo stadium full of people desperate for freedom and sovereign existence, stating:

We are no longer a British colony, we are a free, sovereign people all that vast throng of people we could see tears. And I stood there thinking about so many things. Before I knew it, I started weeping. I was crying for joy. And I knew about all of the struggles, and all of the pain, and all of the agony that these people had gone through for this moment.⁶⁰

King's *Beloved Pan-Africanism* includes an enduring quality found among most Pan-Africanists, empathy for poor and oppressed people and peoples. For King, empathy and activism for Black people irrespective of their ethnicity or national origin is a quality more important and enduring than fixating on one's "African roots."

King's *Beloved Pan-Africanism* fits squarely within Richardson's articulation

57. King, *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*, supra note 24.

58. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project, *The Birth of a New Nation*, April 7, 1957, page 156.

59. *Id.*

60. *Birth of a New Nation*, supra note 58, at 160.

of the Black International Tradition, thereby bolstering the rightful designation of King as a human rights leader and consequently fortifying my thesis that he was a legitimate Pan-Africanist leader. One could legitimately argue that it is not possible to understand King's global ministry without recognizing his Pan-African inclinations, activism, and philosophy or *Beloved Pan-Africanism*. King's *Beloved Pan-Africanism* is exceptional for what it proposes and disregards. It nicely outfits Pan-Africanism—traditionally dressed in atheist garb—with an embroidered robe of Black Christian normative undergarments. *Beloved Pan-Africanism* illuminates the spiritual and human dimensions of Pan-Africanism, arguing for radical non-violent direct action over militaristic confrontation, love over hate and divine justice over apathy and chaos. It also boldly recognizes the need of the Black Diaspora, particularly, for African-Americans to immigrate to and otherwise contribute to Africa's development, a cornerstone of Pan-Africanist ideology.⁶¹ These elements are captured in King's *Birth of a New Nation*.

In 1957, four years before President John F. Kennedy established the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), King did what so many Pan-Africanists before him had done, and called for African-Americans to return to Africa to assist in its development, arguing:

Right now is the time that American Negroes can lend their technical assistance to a growing new nation. I was very happy to see already, people who have moved in and making good. The son of the late president of Bennett College, Dr. Jones, is there, who started an insurance company and making good, going to the top. A doctor [Dr. Robert and Sara Lee] from Brooklyn, New York, had just come in that week and his wife is also a dentist, and they are living there now, going in there and working, and the people love them.⁶²

King encouraged African-Americans to immigrate to Ghana and was inspired by those who had done so long before arrivals of W.E.B. DuBois, Dr. Robert Lee and his wife Sara (the first Black dentists in the country), and David Jones (son of David Dallas Jones, president of Bennett College, and founder of the Ghana Insurance Company).⁶³ King assured African-Americans that President Nkrumah

61. I believe that King intended for African/African-American relations to be mutually beneficial and not one-sided. For example, African contributions to the lives and well-being of African-Americans and Africa through dual citizenship programs, Diaspora investment programs in Africa, African investment in urban communities, consul-general appointments, global positions (positioning African-Americans in international organizations), and support of international organizations who aid, for example, anti-police brutality claims.

62. *Birth of a New Nation*, *supra* note 58, at 161. See also *Birth of a New Nation*, *supra* note 58, n. 10 ("David Dallas Jones was president of Bennett College from 1926 to 1956. His son David established the Ghana Insurance Company in Accra.").

63. I had the honor and pleasure to interview Dr. Robert Lee in 2007 and 2008 about Dr. King's 1957 visit to Ghana. Lee first traveled to Ghana in 1953 and emigrated there in 1956. Known as Black America's elder statesman and as an Ambassador to Ghana, Lee became a naturalized citizen in 1963, and remained there until his death on July 5, 2010. Upon his and Sara's arrival in Ghana there was only one Lebanese ex-patriate dentist in the country. Many Black American emigrants to Ghana fled after Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966. Per Dr. Lee,

welcomed them claiming that "...Nkrumah made it very clear to me that he would welcome any persons coming there as immigrants and to live there."⁶⁴ Again, it is quite remarkable that at the age of 29, King possessed the political intellect, consciousness, and courage to encourage African-Americans to assist in Ghana's development before the establishment of USAID on November 3, 1961, placing him squarely into the prophetic and radical Pan-African tradition of DuBois and Marcus Mosiah Garvey. King embraced Pan-African ideals throughout his global human rights ministry as evidenced by, among others, *Birth of a New Nation* (1957) and *Let My People Go* (1965) speeches (the latter was delivered in honor of DuBois). Black Pan-Africanist pioneers such as Dr. Robert Lee significantly influenced King's Pan-African inclinations during his visit to Ghana. Lee organized a dinner with King, Bill Sutherland, and fellow Pan-Africanist Julius Nyerere, who in 1960 became Tanzania's first Prime Minister. King encircled himself with leading African-American and continental Pan-African leaders, and through these interactions between 1956 until his death in 1968, King refined his civil and human rights philosophies that underwrote his reiteration as *Beloved Pan-Africanism*. For example, during his Dexter Avenue Baptist Church speech on Ghana's independence, King stated:

I close to say three or four things that this reminds us of and things that it says to us. Things that we must never forget as we ourselves find ourselves breaking a loose from an evil Egypt, trying to move through the wilderness toward the promised land of cultural integration: Ghana has something to say to us. It says to us first, that the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed. You have to work for it. And if Nkrumah and the people of the Gold Coast had not stood up persistently, revolting against the system, it would still be a colony of the British Empire. Freedom is never given to anybody. For the oppressor has you in domination because he plans to keep you there, and he never voluntarily gives it up. And that is where the strong resistance comes. Privileged classes never give up their privileges without strong resistance.⁶⁵

Leading his Alabamian audience beyond the myth of the "Dark Continent", King intelligently describes Africa through the lens of Ghana as a revolutionary market place pregnant with freedom and opportunity. He wove together the historiographies and modern realities of Black oppression in Ghana and the U.S. into nesting equivalents or interdependent emulations; colonial rule along *de jure* segregation and decolonization beside desegregation. In *Birth of a New Nation*, King reminds us that "[i]f there had not been an Nkrumah and his followers in Ghana, Ghana would still be a British colony. If there had not been abolitionists in America, both Negro and white, we might still stand today in the dungeons of

who was a classmate of Nkrumah's at Lincoln University, he "received the King in Ghana and tended to him when he fell ill." In a July 2007 interview in Accra, Ghana, Dr. Lee shared with the author that during his visit to Ghana he stayed at Achimoto School and became "ill or very frustrated" when he realized his access to Nkrumah was limited given the large number of visiting dignitaries.

64. *Id.*

65. *Birth of a New Nation*, supra note 58, at 162.

slavery.”⁶⁶ King clearly viewed colonization and segregation as twin evils sharing the same head and requiring the same form of non-violent decapitation. However, King viewed Ghana’s approach to independence and freedom as a “beautiful thing” because it achieved independence non-violently,⁶⁷ remarking:

That here is a nation that is now free, and it is free without rising up with arms and with ammunition. It is free through nonviolent means. Because of that the British Empire will not have the bitterness for Ghana that she has for China, so to speak. Because of that when the British Empire leaves Ghana, she leaves with a different attitude than she would have left with if she had been driven out by armies. We’ve got to revolt in such a way that after revolt is over we can live with people as their brothers and their sisters. Our aim must never be to defeat them or humiliate them.⁶⁸

King’s observation is remarkable and re-emphasizes the five pillars of *Beloved Pan-Africanism* including love, radical non-violent direct action, empathy, grave personal sacrifice, and divine justice. These forward-leaning principles helped Ghana shed the yokes of colonialism while allowing it to co-exist and work with Britain. King accentuates this point with Black Baptist storytelling about what he witnessed during Ghana’s Independence Day celebration dinner where, “[o]n the night of the State Ball...Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah was there dancing with the Duchess of Kent. And I said, “Isn’t this something? Here it is the once-serf, the once-slave, now dancing with the lord on an equal plane. And that is done because there is no bitterness.”⁶⁹

Witnessing Ghana’s example, King believed that the “aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, redemption and ‘reconciliation, not its nemeses, violence, which only breeds emptiness and bitterness.”⁷⁰ He called on African-Americans to “fight passionately and unrelenting for the goals of justice and peace” with clean hands.⁷¹ Love, he argued, was the most powerful weapon and he wanted Blacks to aggressively employ radical non-violent direct action against oppression arguing that “[i]f we wait for it to work itself out, it will never be worked out! Freedom only comes through persistent revolt, through persistent agitation, through persistently rising up against the system of evil.”⁷² These are clearly not the words of a passivist. King warned that integrated buses are “just the beginning” and that Blacks must persistently push for change or risk being placed in “the dungeons of segregation and discrimination for another hundred years . . . where our children’s children will suffer all of the bondage we have lived under for years.”⁷³

66. *Id.*

67. *Id.*

68. *Id.*

69. *Id.*

70. *Birth of a New Nation*, *supra* note 58, at 162.

71. *Id.*

72. *Id.* at 161.

73. *Id.* at 162.

King's *Beloved Pan-Africanism* is human centered and dogmatic. It rejected violence, falsehood, hate and malice and embraced love "so that when the day comes that the walls of segregation have completely crumbled in Montgomery, that we will be able to live with people as their brothers and sisters," harking back to Nkrumah and the Duchess of Kent's dance on Ghana's independence day.⁷⁴ He did not want to defeat racist segregationists, but only the evil in them while simultaneously living in friendship as the "aim is to live with all men as brothers and sisters under God."⁷⁵

In the quintessential lingua franca of Pan-Africanists, King emboldened his analysis through comparative illustrations in Asia and beyond arguing that:

If there had not been a Gandhi in India with all of his noble followers, India would have never been free. If there had not been an Nkrumah and his followers in Ghana, Ghana would still be a British colony. If there had not been abolition-lists in America, both Negro and white, we might still stand today in the dungeons of slavery. And then because there have been, in every period, there are always those people in every period of human history who don't mind getting their necks cut off, who don't mind being persecuted and discriminated and kicked about, because they know that freedom is never given out, but it comes through the persistent and the continual agitation and revolt on the part of those who are caught in the system. Ghana teaches us that.⁷⁶

King's instructive references to India and Ghana as examples of progressive radical movements seem to edify the fact that African-American oppression forms one part of a long continuum of colored oppression that can only be fought globally through *Beloved Pan-Africanism*, reminding us "that a nation or a people can break a loose from oppression without violence."⁷⁷ King was not only a student of Gandhi but also of Consciencism or Nkrumism (Kwame Nkrumah's philosophy),⁷⁸ which provided the ideological mortar to defeat colonialism "without armed revolt, without armies and ammunition, rising up[.]"⁷⁹ which again King admired, calling it a "beautiful thing."⁸⁰ He held that the avoidance of bloodshed meant that Britain would more likely bolster rather than undermine Ghana's sovereignty and development and that a nation or people can "break

74. *Id.*

75. *Birth of a New Nation*, *supra* note 58, at 163

76. *Id.* at 162.

77. *See id.* ("It reminds us of the fact that a nation or a people can break aloose from oppression without violence.").

78. *See* KWAME NKUMAH, CONSCIENCISM: PHILOSOPHY AND IDEOLOGY FOR DE-COLONIZATION 4 (Monthly Review Press, January 1964) ("[T]here were the vast numbers of ordinary Africans, who, animated by a lively national consciousness, sought knowledge as an instrument of national emancipation and integrity.").

79. *See Birth of a New Nation*, *supra* note 58, at 162 (explaining how Nkrumah initially thought physical resistance was the only method to break free from colonialism, but changed his mind after continued study).

80. *See id.* ("Then he says after he continued to study Gandhi and continued to study this technique, he came to see that the only way was through nonviolent positive action.").

aloose from evil through nonviolence, through a lack of bitterness.”⁸¹ Furthermore, he maintained the dogmatic view that “Ghana reminds us that freedom never comes on a silver platter”⁸² and that bombed homes and churches, deceptiveness and falsities, prison and even death is the price for “breaking aloose from Egypt.”⁸³ Hence, King’s *Beloved Pan-Africanism* was sacrificial and relentless. It boldly condemned slavery, colonialism, and domination arguing that “[t]here is something in the soul that cries out for freedom. There is something deep down within the very soul of a man that reaches out for Canaan”,⁸⁴ an obvious analogy to Jewish subjugation under Egypt and the ancient values of freedom and death.⁸⁵

History has severely underplayed the extent to which King was invigorated by Nkrumah’s Ghana, and her example fortified his belief that “[t]here is no crown without a cross”, no Easter without Good Friday, and no Cannan without a Red Sea.⁸⁶ By 1957, King clearly understood that the “long story of freedom” necessitated hard labor and toil.⁸⁷ He faithfully believed that Ghana’s example showed that the “forces of the universe are on the side of justice,” and that the “old order of colonialism, of segregation, of discrimination is passing away now.”⁸⁸ King viewed Ghana’s independence as God ordained where the “forces of justice” aligned with the universe prohibiting the old order from trampling “over God’s children and profit[ing] from it” demonstrating *Beloved Pan-Africanism*’s preoccupation with divine justice.⁸⁹ King’s profound understanding of the linkages and interdependence of white supremacist systems such as colonialism, segregation, Apartheid, and their multifarious impacts on persons of African descent all over the world—including what he referred to as the Asian-Africa bloc—shows the rich depths of his Pan-African intellect. Connecting in common cause and empathizing with the plight of the colored peoples of Africa, Asia, and the ensuing Diasporas, comprised an important dimension of Pan-Africanism that King embraced well before the mid-1950s Montgomery Bus Boycott and the rise of the 1960s Black Power movements. However, King’s Pan-Africanist advocacy

81. See *id.* at 163 (“And this is one thing that Ghana teaches us: that you can break aloose from evil through nonviolence, through a lack of bitterness.”).

82. See *id.* (citing Ghana as an example of the sacrifice, patience, and persistence required to achieve independence through peaceful positive action).

83. See *id.* (“[Y]ou better get ready for stiff backs. You better get ready for some homes to be bombed. You better get ready for some churches to be bombed. You better get ready for a lot of nasty things to be said about you . . .”).

84. *Id.* at 175.

85. *Birth of a New Nation*, *supra* note 58, at 175.

86. See *id.* at 163 (illustrating by way of Biblical examples the hardships and obstacles that sometimes must be faced before achieving one’s goals).

87. See *id.* (“The road to freedom is a difficult, hard road. It always makes for temporary setbacks. And those people who tell you today that there is more tension in [Montgomery, Alabama] than there has ever been are telling you right.”).

88. *Id.* at 164.

89. See *id.* (explaining that the transition of power in Ghana was about more than the simple question of, “Who is in control?”, but to more substantial inquiries as to the role of colonialism, segregation, and discrimination moving forward).

confronted systemic oppression outside of the traditional areas of race, politics and economics, into religion, especially through Black Christianity. He confronted the blood-soaked robes of the global Christian establishment, namely the Church of England, who he identified as a co-conspirator in the global oppression of Blacks. King reasoned that the Church of England never took a stand against slavery, colonialism and enslavement arguing that it had “sanctioned it” giving it “moral stature.”⁹⁰ He emboldens his indictment by proclaiming that “[a]ll of the exploitation perpetuated by the British Empire was sanctioned by the Church of England,”⁹¹ thereby illuminating the tragic historical interdependence between church and state in the subjugation of Africa and the Diaspora—a critique that few Pan-Africanists presented earlier than King.

King’s *Beloved Pan-Africanism* was anchored in divine justice and celestial consequentialism or the understanding and conviction that when man’s church failed God would take a stand, arguing:

God has injected a principle in this universe. God has said that all men must respect the dignity and worth of all human personality, “And if you don’t do that, I will take charge.” It seems this morning that I can hear God speaking. I can hear Him speaking throughout the universe, saying, “‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ And if you don’t stop, if you don’t straighten up, if you don’t stop exploiting people, I’m going to rise up and break the backbone of your power. And your power will be no more!” And the power of Great Britain is no more. I looked at France. I looked at Britain. And I thought about the Britain that could boast, “The sun never sets on our great Empire.” And I say now she had gone to the level that the sun hardly rises on the British Empire. Because it was based on exploitation. Because the God of the universe eventually takes a stand.⁹²

Ghana’s successful quest for independence bolstered King’s belief in divine justice. Just as God had broken Ghana free from the yokes of colonial domination, King believed that God would end American segregation, discrimination, and racial exploitation of African-Americans. King’s *Beloved Pan-Africanism* was rooted in holiness, which is seemingly why he encouraged Black Americans to “rise-up”, fully believing that God ordered them and other activists to “break down the bondage and the walls of colonialism, exploitation, and imperialism.”⁹³ He sought to destroy the fortifications of oppression so that “no man will trample over another man”, and so that all men will respect the human dignity of one another in

90. See *Birth of a New Nation*, *supra* note 58, at 165 (“[W]hen I stood there in Westminster Abbey with all of its beauty, and I thought about all of the beautiful hymns and anthems that the people would go in there to sing. And yet the Church of England never took a stand against this [system of exploitation].”).

91. *Id.*

92. See *id.* at 165–66 (quoting Psalms 46:10 and Leviticus 26:19).

93. See *id.* at 166 (“[B]ecause God is working in this world, and at this hour, and at this moment. And God grants that we will get on board and start marching with God because we got orders now to break down the bondage and the walls of colonialism, exploitation, and imperialism.”).

search of "Canaan's freedom land."⁹⁴

VI. CONCLUSION

This essay contends with relative confidence that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Pan-Africanist, one who was as connected to his African roots and African intellect as DuBois and C.L.R. James, and who stood in 'common cause' with Africa and the Black Diaspora. King's profound Pan-African intellect merged colonial oppression, segregation, and Apartheid long before his 1957 Black pilgrimage to Africa.⁹⁵ *Beloved Pan-Africanism* offers a new quadrant of Pan-Africanism rooted in the Black Christian pantheon and the radical Black International Tradition. As Richardson observes, it was a "direct challenge to the balance-of-power theories of international relations and territorial sovereignty jurisprudence of international law."⁹⁶ This contention, based on a careful reading of King's speeches, sermons, interviews, letters, and other sources, reveal his state of mind, activism, and other activities in support of African unity, African independence, Africans, and African-Americans. This essay demonstrates how King fits into the history of Pan-African theory and praxis in America and transnationally, especially his fervent attacks on what he deemed to be the "evils" of colonialism and imperialism for raping and plundering Africa and her peoples for 200 years,⁹⁷ and oppressing "colored people of the world."⁹⁸ King's *Beloved Pan-Africanism* ultimately conceived his global human rights ministry and is governed by opposition to what he concluded were the three evils of racism, poverty, and militarism. As hitherto noted, *Beloved Pan-Africanism* nested on five pillars including love, radical non-violent direct action, empathy, grave personal sacrifice, and divine justice. It was anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-war with all their tragic civil, political, economic, social, and cultural antecedents.

King's *Beloved Pan-Africanism* blossomed between 1957 and 1968 in lock step with African independence. However, researchers need to uncover more about the development of King's transnational consciousness from his childhood up to his doctoral studies at Boston University, giving special attention to familial and

94. *Id.*

95. See Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The Vision of a World Made New, Sermon at the Annual National Baptist Convention (Sept. 9, 1954), in THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PAPERS PROJECT 183, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/vision-world-made-new> (referencing how religious institutions accepted colonialism and imperialism three years before his "Birth of a New Nation" Sermon).

96. Richardson, *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an International Human Rights Leader*, *supra* note 1, at 483.

97. See Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The Birth of a New Age, Address Delivered at the Fiftieth Anniversary of Alpha Phi Alpha in Buffalo (Aug. 11, 1956), in THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PAPERS PROJECT 341, http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol03Scans/339_1956_The%20Birth%20of%20a%20New%20Age.pdf ("We see [the old order] on the national scale in the form of segregation and discrimination—that is the old order that we witness today passing away. We know the history of this old order in America.").

98. *Id.* at 340.

church influences, and to his exposure to Benjamin E. Mays, Mordecai Johnson, the writings of Mohandas K. Gandhi, and other experiential and intellectual sources. The fact that King grew up in a home and church environment that encouraged a concern for world affairs, and especially African affairs, needs closer attention.

Though modest, this essay fills an alarming gap in the academic discourse and, ostensibly, literature about King's political philosophy and his Pan-Africanist activism in human rights and social justice issues beyond America's borders. It challenges the tendency, even among King scholars, to restrict the civil rights leader to an American accommodationist/reformist, and properly locates him in the radical Pan-Africanist context and Black International Tradition that expressed itself through a global ministry of human rights. As early as 1956, Ralph Bunche, the famed internationalist and first Black Nobel Peace Prize Laureate,⁹⁹ acknowledged King's "patient determination", "wisdom," and "quiet courage" were "constituting an inspiring chapter in the history of human dignity" particularly "in the face of threats and resorts to police state methods of intimidation."¹⁰⁰ Hence, by 1956, King's Pan-African and human rights ministry had shaken the moral fabric of the world earning the respect of leading Pan-African intellectuals such as C.L.R. James and pragmatic Pan-Africanists like Bunche, who opined in his letter to King that "right is on your side and all the world knows it."¹⁰¹ King's network of African brotherhood ran deep and included a pioneering cadre of Pan-African leaders. This brotherhood included Kwame Nkrumah, first prime minister and president of Ghana, Nnamdi Azikiwe, first president of Nigeria, Tom Mboya, one of the founding fathers of the Republic of Kenya, and Oliver Tambo, leader of South Africa's African National Congress. King's famous phrase "[c]ertainly injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"¹⁰² was referring to Africa's struggle against colonial rule because he believed that "so long as problems exist in Africa, or in Asia, or in any section of the United States [a clear reference to Black America], we must be concerned about it."¹⁰³ King's *Beloved Pan-Africanism* viewed the American Civil Rights Movement as one of several interrelated struggles forming a continuum of the "worldwide revolution for freedom and justice" that affects the entirety of the

99. *Ralph Bunche - Facts - Nobel Prize Laureates*, NOBELPRIZE.ORG, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1950/bunche-facts.html (last accessed Apr. 18, 2017).

100. Telegram from Ralph Bunche to Dr. King (Feb. 22, 1956), in THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PAPERS PROJECT, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/ralph-j-bunche>; see Letter from C.L.R. James to Dr. King (Apr. 5, 1957), in THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PAPERS PROJECT 149–50, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol4/5-Apr-1957_FromJames.pdf (asking Dr. King to review a draft of James' *The Black Jacobins*, a historical account of Haitians' struggle for independence).

101. Telegram from Ralph Bunche, *supra* note 100.

102. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Remarks Delivered at Africa Freedom Dinner at Atlanta University (May 13, 1959), in THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PAPERS PROJECT 203, 204, http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol05Scans/13May1959_RemarksDeliveredatAfricaFreedomDinneratAtlantaUniv.pdf

103. *Id.* at 204.

Black Diaspora for which he was profoundly invested.¹⁰⁴

104. *See id.* at 203–04 (“And in a real sense what we are trying to do in the South and in the United States is a part of this worldwide struggle for freedom and human dignity . . . part of the worldwide revolution for freedom and justice.”).

